

TESOL PORTFOLIO
Research and Adaptation of the Focal Skills Approach
TSOL 692

Stephen Place
SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

The research paper, annotated bibliography, and curriculum design are discussed in the portfolio in this order. The reason I chose these types of papers is that I desire to present this portfolio to Greenville County School Board for possible implementation of the adaptation to the Focal Skills Approach to Greenville County's high school English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. I believe that for them to have the desire to implement this adaptation of the Focal Skills Approach, they will first need to be convinced that the approach and its methods are grounded in reliable and valid research. Second, the school board needs to see the need for this approach. The research paper partially answers these needs by discussing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for ESOL students, Greenville County's current implementation of South Carolina's 2006 ESOL standards, and how the Focal Skills approach will better aid Greenville County's high school ESOL program in meeting NCLB's 2013 requirements. The annotated bibliography further provides the school board with a general knowledge of the Focal Skills Approach itself and other methods that are used within the approach as well. The curriculum design fulfills the above mentioned needs by demonstrating to the school board how the Focal Skills Approach and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc.'s 2005 Revised Standards can be successfully adapted as a high school ESOL program, which again will enable Greenville County's high school ESOL program to satisfy NCLB's 2013 requirements.

Research on Focal Skills Approach and Other Related Issues

Stephen Place

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Research on Focal Skills Approach and Other Related Issues

Approaches and curricula for English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) come and go as quickly as fads in the clothing industry with all of the approaches vying for our attention and promising that they are the sole solution to a school district's ESOL problems on all educational levels. It is up to each school district to choose, after careful and thorough research, which ESOL approach and/or curriculum meets their needs the best. For the Greenville County School District (GCSD) in South Carolina, I believe that there is an approach used on the university ESOL level that can be easily adapted for Greenville County's high school ESOL population. This adapted approach will enable the ESOL population to provide a more positive impact on the annual school report card by successfully meeting all of the requirements that are set at the state and/or federal levels for these students.

I will first discuss the federal expectation that the United States (U.S.) has for its ESOL students through the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). I will next discuss how Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Inc. has recently revised its 1997 ESOL standards to better reflect the expectations that NCLB has for public schools. Third, I will discuss South Carolina's creation of ESOL standards. Fourth, I will explain how GCSD has implemented the South Carolina standards on the high school level. Fifth, I will explain how the Focal Skills Approach functions on the university level. Last, I will conclude by proposing that based on the research done into the above areas that the Focal Skills Approach be adapted for Greenville County's high school ESOL program along with the implementation of TESOL Inc.'s revised standards.

NCLB Requirements for ESOL Students

In 2001, the U.S. federal government created the No Child Left Behind Act, which measures both students' academic performance and teachers' instructional effectiveness in the classroom. NCLB has set three broad governing proposals for each state's ESOL programs to follow. The first governing proposal is that in order for funds to be continued at the state level, each state in return must indicate that their ESOL students are receiving performance-based objectives that move the ESOL students to being fluent in English in three years. A second stipulation within the first proposal is that these ESOL students must also be receiving similar rigorous content instruction in the core academic areas as their counterparts receive in regular English speaking classes. The second governing proposal being given to each state is that sanctions will be imposed for not meeting these performance-based objectives. The sanction is a loss of up to ten percent of their administrative Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding. The third governing principle being given to each state is that NCLB prohibits the federal government from coercing the states into using a specific method in order to receive funding. This principle allows local school districts to have the freedom to choose effective approaches to teaching ESOL students (White House, n.d.).

In February of 2004, then Secretary of Education Rob Paige stated that NCLB “provide[d] more than \$13 billion for LEP students for English language acquisition and academic achievement” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004b). ESOL programs can obtain these funds from Titles I and III under NCLB. Title I funds are for districts in high poverty areas that have an abundance of low achieving students. NCLB has the expectation that each state receiving Title I funds will specifically have among other areas of concern their ESOL students performing proficient on each state's “academic achievement standards and . . . academic

assessments” (Public Law, 2002). All other districts not in high poverty areas use Title III funds for their ESOL programs. States receiving Title III funds will have their ESOL students speaking proficient English, developing high academic skills, and performing at the same levels as native English speakers in academic achievement areas and assessments (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

ESOL students are assessed in language proficiency and academic content areas. NCLB requires all states to annually assess ESOL students in both language proficiency and the academic areas of English, math, and now science (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition, 2003). Assessments for the academic areas are in the form of norm- or criterion-reference tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The language proficiency tests can either be commercially produced or created by the respective states. If a state chooses the latter option, it must ensure that its language proficiency test aligns itself with the standards that state has set for its ESOL students (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition, 2003). The main advantages to standards-based assessments, which our ESOL students are annually subjected to, are that the teacher does not have to create the test; the test is already validated and reliable; and the scoring many times is efficient (Brown, 2004). The biggest advantage is that NCLB requires this type of testing as its primary source of assessment (Association of American Publishers, n.d.). The disadvantages of using the assessments themselves are some teachers use the wrong type of standards-based assessment to measure what they are assessing; some questions have been found on standard-based assessments that have no correlation with the standards being measured; and even though the assessment may show as Brown states, “high correlations between performance . . . and target objectives, [the] correlations are not sufficient to demonstrate unequivocally the acquisition of

criterion objectives by *all* (italics not mine) test-takers” (Brown, 2004). Another disadvantage of standard-based assessments and with standardized testing in general is the high-stakes that are placed many times on the students and teachers.

The high-stakes of NCLB come in the form of adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP makes sure that students are meeting state academic and achievement standards while continuing to make progress toward closing the achievement gaps in student performance among high- and low- achievers (Public Law, 2002). The results of the standards-based assessments determine whether schools make AYP. Benefits of making AYP come in the form of additional funds for states and local school districts, which can come in the form of teacher bonuses. Consequences of not making AYP come in the form of additional help from the federal government. However, after three consecutive years of not meeting AYP, the government will impose reduced funds for that state (White House, n.d.). The pressures of meeting AYP are causing some states and school districts to have more test-driven learning and teaching instead of content-driven learning and teaching.

TESOL Inc. Standards for ESOL Students

TESOL Inc. was created in 1966 as a professional organization that according to Alatis, “might bring together teachers and administrators at all educational levels with an interest in teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL)” (Alatis, n.d., para 1). Among its various facets, TESOL Inc. created ESOL standards for Pre-K-12 public education in 1997 and revised these standards as recently as 2006. The revised ESOL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students are more closely aligned to NCLB’s expectations of ESOL teachers developing not only the ESOL students’ Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) but also their Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS) as well. By including the academic content

areas into the revised standards, I believe that TESOL Inc. is making the effort to help ESOL teachers meet the 2013 expectations that NCLB has regardless of how unrealistic or realistic those NCLB expectations may be for our ESOL population. The revised standards focus in greater detail on building content vocabulary in each specific subject area and more importantly how the ESOL students can use the English language with confidence and competence in each of these subject areas. TESOL Inc. consulted with professional organizations in each content area in creating their content area standards. Including these professional academic organizations in the documentation shows just how far TESOL Inc. has gone to ensure the public that the ESOL students are receiving the best education that ESOL teachers can provide, if they choose to implement the TESOL Inc. standards into their curriculum. The revised standards were created using a bottom-up approach. This bottom-up approach signifies to all that these standards were created from those who are in the field as Pre-K-12 ESOL teachers. These standards are based on realistic expectations that ESOL teachers have and are also based on the experiences that many ESOL teachers have had in the classroom.

Here are some highlights of the 2006 revised Pre-K-12 ESOL standards from TESOL Inc. Standard one of the revised standards is now further enhanced by the other four standards, which include the academic subject areas. With the revised standards, TESOL Inc. created the PreK-K, 1-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 grade breakdown levels. These levels better group and represent the various cognitive development stages of children and more effective instructional strategies for the standards can be implemented in the classroom. Basically, TESOL Inc. has given ESOL teachers better defined tools in how to instruct students in more manageable age groupings than ever before. In the revised standards, having the macro areas specifically broken into language domains that are implemented across the goals that the general public can see alleviates concern

by some about how we can enhance their academic skills if the students do not know how to read and write. TESOL Inc. incorporates the five levels of proficiency into the standards. The five levels of proficiency are starting up, beginning, expanding, developing, and bridging over (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 2005). These levels of proficiency allow the ESOL teacher the opportunity to better monitor student progression in acquiring his/her L2. The proficiency levels, especially level five (bridging over) provides the ESOL teacher with more reliable proof to the administration that the ESOL student is ready to be mainstreamed and monitored than a one time standardized test that may not truly reflect what the student has acquired and where the teacher knows that the student can perform in the various academic areas (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 2005).

South Carolina's Standards for ESOL Students

South Carolina's (SC) ESOL standards were created in 2006 by the South Carolina State Department of Education (SCSDE) in conjunction with ESOL teachers from all academic levels in South Carolina's K-12 public educational system (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a). The South Carolina ESOL standards focus on developing proficiency in the four macro areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The authors of the standards state that the standards are not to be used primarily by themselves for sole purpose of language instruction for ESOL students but are closely aligned with the SC English language arts standards, and these ESOL standards are to be used by both the ESOL teacher and the regular education teacher in conjunction with the appropriate grade-level content standards for the ESOL student (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a). The standards are created in such a way that the ESOL teacher does not need to strictly adhere to the progression of the standards on paper (i.e. have the entering ESOL student regardless of his English proficiency and amount of formal

education start at the beginning of the SC ESOL standards and progress step-by-step through the ESOL program) but can have the freedom to create tasks that use the standards as a guideline and tasks built around them that accurately represent where the ESOL student is socially and academically and even takes into consideration how much formal education the child has received in his/her native country (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a). The creators of South Carolina's ESOL standards desire to develop not only the ESOL student's BICS but more importantly want to develop and enhance the ESOL student's CALPS. The SC ESOL standards creators cite the editors of the 2006 report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth as evidence to their position to develop and enhance not only the BICS but more importantly the ESOL student's CALPS by stating:

Extensive oral English development must be incorporated into successful literacy instruction. The most promising instructional practices for language-minority students bear out this point: Literacy programs that provide instructional support of oral language development in English, aligned with high-quality literacy instruction are the most successful. (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a, p.3)

Again, the SCSDE desires to have an ESOL student upon graduation or however long the ESOL student is in the South Carolina K-12 public education system to possess English proficiency in all the macro areas (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a).

The SC ESOL standards as previously stated in the above paragraph are broken down into the four macro areas that are aligned very closely to the SC English language arts academic standards for K-12 public schools and are to be used in conjunction with the ESOL students' grade level academic standards. These standards possess no further breakdown outside of the performance indicators; thereby, forcing the ESOL teacher to use the ESOL student's grade level

academic standards for further guidance on how to apply the standards to instructional activities and teaching strategies. There are four listening and speaking standards with an average of three performance indicators per standard. There are eight reading standards and five writing standards with an average of four performance indicators per standard (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006a).

Greenville County High Schools' Application of SC's ESOL Standards

Greenville County School District operates fourteen high schools. The majority of the high schools have at least one certified ESOL teacher. The certification of ESOL teachers ranges from certification to master's degrees in ESOL from various accredited colleges and universities around the United States. Currently the ESOL programs serve mostly Hispanic students with other nationalities being represented as well (South Carolina State Department of Education, 2006b). Greenville County School District provides four ESOL course descriptions with levels one through four (i.e. ESOL 1, ESOL 2 etc.). A brief summary of each course description is as follows: ESOL 1 concentrates on developing and enhancing survival English. Students read short passages from newspapers and magazines that concentrate on American Culture, and minor teacher assistance is given to core content areas; ESOL 2 continues to enhance macroskills and provides an intensive grammatical study of the English Language that culminates in students being able to create and develop a five paragraph essay. Continued enhancement of macroskills and knowledge of American Culture are now provided through short literary passages as well as continued academic content area assistance; ESOL 3 reviews the grammatical knowledge received in ESOL 2. The main focus of ESOL 3 is on continued enhancement of reading and writing skills by analyzing literary works. Oral skills continue to be enhanced by focusing on American Culture. Academic assistance continues in core content classes with specific

assistance being administered for writing and oral skills; and ESOL 4 has the students possess a high proficiency of English oral and written skills. The teacher provides assistance in the study of complex grammatical structures. Longer literary passages are studied for continued enhancement of American Culture, vocabulary development etc. Heavy emphasis is placed upon writing in order to prepare the students for writing a research paper and other written assignments required by core content classes. Some emphasis is placed on standardized test taking skills and effective study habits. The ESOL courses do not take the place of any required English course (Greenville County Schools, 2006). Based on information found at each individual ESOL teacher's web page, it appears that the teachers are free to pick and choose which elements of the course descriptions they will incorporate into their classroom curriculum. All four ESOL courses may not even be offered at each high school. Due to the lack of unity among the ESOL programs at the different high schools, there is no adequate oversight to ensure that proper ESOL services are being provided to each student. The lack of oversight could cause lapses in the rigor of ESOL programs from high school to high school; therefore, some students may receive ESOL services longer than necessary, while others may be mainstreamed prematurely.

It is my belief that GCSD's ESOL course descriptions are more academically oriented than service oriented, due to Greenville County's adherence to the South Carolina ESOL Standards. There seems to be two conflicting focuses in Greenville County's ESOL program. The main focus is to have the ESOL students reach a high proficiency with the English language, while simultaneously focusing on the adequate provision of academic assistance in the core content areas. It is my belief that Greenville County is trying to develop BICS and CALPS through the means of academia. This focus on developing English language proficiency through

academics instead of developing English proficiency through the language itself is not only providing mediocrity in the ESOL students' BICS and CALPS but is also adversely affecting the high schools' ability to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards as defined by NCLB. I believe that adapting the Focal Skills Approach provides the solutions to the focus dilemma of Greenville County's ESOL program.

The Focal Skills Approach

The history of the development of the Focal Skills is that the approach originated in 1984 when the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) TESOL faculty invited then current leaders in the field of Second Language Acquisition to a symposium to discuss current approaches in Second Language Acquisition. Based on information gleaned from that symposium, UWM restructured their Intensive English Program (IEP) for their ESOL students by creating the Focal Skills Approach, which has successfully been in use since 1988. The Focal Skills Approach was developed by Dr. Ashley Hastings who has successfully implemented the program not only at UWM but also at the University of Dallas (Hastings, n.d.l).

The key features of the Focal Skills Approach include modules that are skill-focused, a customized placement system, the use of "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, p. 2) and authentic materials, functional skill integration, and frequent adjustments to the students' placement to show his/her proficiency growth (Hastings, n.d.k). In the Focal Skills Approach, the main goal is language acquisition with a major focus on rapid acquisition of practical language proficiency. Once the students have obtained a practical proficiency in using the language, then they will have a much easier time functioning and being successful as an active participant and learner in the core content classes (Hastings, n.d.d).

At the core of the Focal Skills Approach is the concept of providing a lot of comprehensible input in order to develop and enhance the language acquisition of the second language learner. This concept of language teaching was developed by Dr. Stephen Krashen and is considered the number one priority for every professional that uses the Focal Skills Approach. The Focal Skills Approach utilizes several teaching techniques that naturally allow for comprehensible input to be given thereby providing ample opportunities for language acquisition to develop. One technique purposely created for the Focal Skills Approach is the Movie Technique that is used in the Listening Module. Basically, the Movie Technique uses movies as the platform where comprehensible input can be given to the students by the teacher constantly narrating and/or paraphrasing on a level where the students comprehend what they are viewing. This comprehensible input is then simultaneously verified by the actions of the characters and development of the plot in the movies being viewed. Another technique is the Talk Show where two teachers interact with the class through conversation while the class is working on a given assignment. Interactive Reading is a group activity where the teacher guides the students through authentic materials. Personal Reading applies Krashen's development of Free Voluntary Reading with the teacher acting as the librarian recommending reading material that takes into account the interests and culture of the students. The Focused Rewrite Technique is a technique where the student writes on a topic of his/her choice and turns in the completed topic. The teacher reads the topic and conferences with the student to ensure understanding of the written ideas. The teacher then takes one of the student's paragraphs and corrects the paragraph maintaining the student's ideas but rewriting the paragraph using Standard English. Then the teacher conferences again with the student using the rewritten paragraph to ask the student if what was rewritten is in actuality what the student was trying to say, while simultaneously

showing the student what his/her rewritten paragraph would look like using Standard English. In sum, the rewritten paragraph uses the student's own writing ideas that are at the student's comprehensible input level and models for him/her what it looks like using Standard English. The modeling in turn provides opportunity for the acquisition of written forms that the student is either ready or near ready to acquire. A last technique is the provision in the Immersion Module for mini-courses that are student-driven. These mini-courses are created from the interests of students and utilize numerous types of academic activities such as discussions, group-work, presentations, etc. (Hastings, n.d.h).

The affective filter is a set of negative or neutral emotions (i.e. anxiety, alienation, boredom, etc) that adversely affect the acquisition process. The Focal Skills Approach tries to alleviate these negative emotions as much as possible. Once the students are placed within each module, there is no actual testing on tasks that are completed within the module. Students are never forced to speak. The student speaks when he/she is ready and comfortable thus producing real communication. Focal Skills also focuses on using authentic materials (i.e. newspapers, magazines, internet, movies, etc) causing less boredom in the students. The authentic materials are materials that the students normally encounter in their daily lives. Classroom activities focus around real communication by concentrating on places, people, stories, ideas, etc. that are found and discussed in everyday life by all peoples. All tests are conducted at the program level for placement purposes only, so all teachers within the modules are positively viewed as mentors instead of being negatively viewed as the assessor. Last, all students are placed together that display similar weaknesses in one of the three macro areas (listening, reading, or writing). Due to this placement system, the students receive more equal attention instead of the stronger students becoming bored or the weaker students feeling that they are forgotten (Hastings, n.d.b)

Focal Skills Approach operates effectively by following the principle of progressive functional skills integration. The progressive functional skills integration is the “logical, systematic integration of the [macro] skills in accordance with their potential uses in the classroom” (Hastings, n.d.i, para. 2). The progressive functional skills approach is applied in the placement and progression of the student through the modules in that a student placed in the Listening Module needs to develop that skill before he/she can be effective in the reading, writing, or advanced modules and so on through the modular progression. The modular progression model provides a failsafe to ensure that students are not being taught material they are not ready for or that the students are not wasting time working on skills that either are not important or that they have already mastered (Hastings, n.d.i).

The four modules provide the core curriculum to the Focal Skills Approach. The advanced module is the only module that does not concentrate on a particular focal skill. The other three modules do focus on a particular focal skill, but all four modules have activities that provide the necessary supporting skills, which enhance the development of the macroskills (Hastings, n.d.g).

The placement system within the Focal Skills Approach is very systematic. A new student entering the program will take the Listening Assessment. If the student receives the predetermined exit score, the student will then take the reading assessment. If the student passes that, then he/she takes the writing assessment. If he/she passes that, then he/she will automatically be placed in the advanced module and is free to leave when he/she is satisfied that he/she will be successful in all academic courses. If a student does not meet the predetermined score for any assessment (i.e. listening, reading, or writing), the student will be placed in that module and will work on that focal skill for four weeks, while continuing to enhance his/her

supporting skills and allowing emergent skills to develop. After the four week period is over, the student will be assessed using a different version of that module's placement test and if he/she receives the predetermined score, he/she moves onto the next modular placement test, or if he/she fails the assessment again, the student will repeat that module until the predetermined exit score is successfully attained (Hastings, n.d.j).

In the Focal Skills, the students have an individualized curriculum in the sense that they are placed in the appropriate module through the placement testing, and the modular design focuses on that student's strengths and weaknesses. In sum, placement testing occurs every four weeks, which provides the student with various modular sequences that focus on that student's current needs. This individualized focus allows the student to progress at his/her desired rate rather than at the dictations of the time sequence that governs other ESOL programs or curricular designs (Hastings, n.d.f).

Within the Focal Skills modular system there is a "built-in Elective Hour that is entirely independent from the modules" (Hastings, n.d.e para 1). This elective hour offers topics that the students themselves choose. The elective hour can focus on topics given in the four modules for additional practice, the teaching of overt grammar, community institutions, etc. The elective hour topics are created every Friday by the students and/or teachers. These topic classes convene on Mondays based on a fair number of interested students and staff member available to teach them, and old topic classes are continuously dropped as new ones are added (Hastings, n.d.e).

Authentic materials are extensively used in the Focal Skills Approach. Authentic material simply means material that is normally found, used, and enjoyed outside of the classroom. The reason for this bias is that the approach lends itself more naturally to the use of authentic materials rather than specific textbooks, and authentic materials are more motivating

and interesting to the students and teachers alike. The benefits of using authentic materials are that they are usually found abundantly in the local community, keep students and teacher motivated, demonstrate through the application of the material the creativity of the teacher and/or student, lower student's affective filters, etc. (Hastings, n.d.a).

Using the Focal Skills Approach, the teacher must be creative, since the approach solely relies on the use of authentic materials for curricular activities. It is the responsibility of the teacher to find appropriate authentic material taking into consideration the cultural make-up of the students; become very familiar and plan very well for each activity; and present the material in a professional manner while effectively engaging all of the students in the class through that professionalism. Realistically, this approach thrives on the person who is proactive, creates rather than follows, is energetic and detail orientated, and sets aside the proper time for the preparation of the materials being used in order for comprehensible input to take place so that the language can be acquired (Hastings, n.d.c).

Conclusion

In essence, NCLB, TESOL Inc.'s revised standards, SC ESOL standards, Greenville County's application of the SC ESOL standards, and the Focal Skills Approach all have their various strengths and weaknesses about them. At the heart of the issue is the ESOL student and the quality of education that student receives in U.S. Pre-K-12 public education. Greenville County high schools can better meet NCLB's AYP and South Carolina's school report card expectations by having the high schools' ESOL population positively impacting the school report card criteria instead of adversely impacting it. I believe this positive impact can come to fruition through the adaptation of the Focal Skills Approach to meet Greenville County's high schools' ESOL language needs. I also believe that the implementation of TESOL Inc.'s 2006 revised

standards into the Advanced Module of the Focal Skills Approach will proficiently provide the academic core content concentration NCLB expects of all standards.

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Annotated Bibliography of the Focal Skills Approach and Related Topics

Asher, J. J. (2000). *Learning another language through actions*. (6th ed.). Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks Productions.

Asher has seven overall sections in his book, and there is an independent section at the back of the book that provides promotional advertisements for his Total Physical Response (TPR) products. In the first section, Asher describes the various and sundry events that led up to the development of TPR and allocation of federal grants to continue researching this approach to language instruction. In the second section, Asher discusses how his approach produces high motivation to acquire another language through classroom and laboratory studies with children and adults. He also provides an overview of how TPR works and why it works based on several different theories from child language development to Suggestology. In the third section, Asher provides a frequently asked questions section about TPR. In the fourth section, Asher provides various classroom lessons that are based on his TPR approach from how to motivate students in the beginning of the language learning process to the students role-playing what was read to them. In the fifth section, Asher provides selected references that enhance his approach. In the sixth section, Asher gives an update to the fifth edition of the above mentioned book including how TPR can be applied to the higher order thinking skills. In the last section, Asher allows the reader to view correspondence he has had with persons using his approach.

Eckman, F.R., Highland, D., Lee, P.W., Mileham, J., & Weber, R. R. (Eds.). (1995). *Second language acquisition: Theory and pedagogy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The editors have five overall sections to their book. The first section has four papers discussing factors that affect the L2 setting. Gass discusses in her paper the necessary intersection between learning and teaching. Schinke-Llan discusses a Vygotskian approach in order to re-envision the second language classroom. Hastings provides an assessment of his Focal Skills Approach in comparison to traditional pre-university ESL classes. Hastings is able to demonstrate through various empirical comparisons the overall efficiency and effectiveness of his approach to language teaching and assessment with higher and quicker acquisition gains vs. the student-hierarchical progression through traditional ESL programs. Flynn and Martohardjono discuss implications of theory-driven language pedagogy. In the second section, White discusses input, triggers, and second language acquisition and whether or not binding can be taught. Hamilton discusses the determination for the basis that the developmental effects noun phrase accessibility hierarchy has in second language acquisition. A third author, Croteau, discusses relative clause structures by Italian learners. In the third section, Larsen-Freeman challenges the myths on teaching and learning grammar. Bardovi-Harlig discusses the interaction of pedagogy and natural sequences in the acquisition of tense and aspect. VanPatten and Sanz discuss the processing instruction and communicative tasks from input to output. In the fourth section, Cohen discusses some research issues in second language theory. Parker et al. explore the role of foreign language in immersion education. Tarone provides examples and pedagogical insights in the variationist framework for second language research. In the last section, Paolillo discusses the markedness in the acquisition of the English /l/ and /r/. Hansen provides a study on the effect of the Acculturation Model on second language acquisition.

Gass, S.M. & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gass and Selinker provide fourteen chapters on the second language process. In chapter one, Gass and Selinker introduce the study of second language acquisition, introduce the nature of language (i.e. sound systems, syntax, etc.), and introduce the nature of nonnative speaker knowledge (i.e. interlanguage system). In chapter two, Gass and Selinker discuss interlanguage data issues such as data analysis, data collection, data elicitation, replication, etc. In chapter three, Gass and Selinker discuss the historical overview of native language from a psychological and linguistic point of view along with other issues of error analysis and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis. In chapter four, Gass and Selinker discuss child first and second language acquisition and the process in which language components are acquired in the first vs. second language. In chapter five, Gass and Selinker discuss recent perspectives on the role of previously known languages in the areas of the morpheme order studies; a revised perspective on the role the native language (i.e. avoidance, different learning rates and paths, overproduction, etc.), and interlanguage transfer. In chapter six, Gass and Selinker discuss second language acquisition and linguistics in the areas of language universals, typological universals (i.e. accessibility hierarchy, acquisition of questions, etc.), tense and aspect (i.e. the aspect and discourse hypotheses), and phonology. In chapter seven, Gass and Selinker discuss the universal grammar issues. In chapter eight, Gass and Selinker look at the interlanguage processes in the areas of the Competition Model, the Monitor Model, critiques of the Monitor Model, and alternative modes of knowledge representation. In chapter nine, Gass and Selinker discuss interlanguage in context with issues such as systematic variation, communicating strategies, interlanguage pragmatics, etc. In chapter ten, Gass and Selinker discuss input, interaction, and

output. Within the chapter specific focus is placed on comprehension, interaction, the role of input and interaction in language learning, metalinguistic awareness, etc. In chapter eleven, Gass and Selinker discuss instructed second language learning that focuses on classroom language, input processing, teachability vs. learnability, focus on form and the uniqueness of instruction. In chapter twelve, Gass and Selinker discuss nonlanguage influences in the areas of research traditions, social distance, age difference, aptitude, motivation, personality factors, and learning strategies of the second language learner. In chapter thirteen, Gass and Selinker discuss the lexicon in the areas of lexical knowledge, lexical information (i.e. word associations, incremental vocabulary learning, etc.), and lexical skills (i.e. production, perception, word formation, word combinations, etc.). In chapter fourteen, Gass and Selinker conclude their book by discussing their integrated view of second language acquisition in an integration of subareas (i.e. apperceived input, comprehended input, intake, integration, and output).

Hastings, A. J. (n.d.). Focal Skills: A brief sketch. Retrieved December 28, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/fssketch.htm>

This article describes a brief overview of the university ESL environment that led up to the development of the Focal Skills Approach; how the Focal Skills Approach began at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM); how the approach itself works; research others have done on the effectiveness of the approach in university level ESL programs; and finally recent developments to the approach. Hastings briefly discusses several university ESL environmental factors that led up to the development of the Focal Skills Approach, the type of student requiring ESL services, and what role ESL services play in the ESL student himself. The Focal Skills Approach originated from the apparent desire of the UWM ESL faculty for a more

current approach to ESL instruction after hosting a symposium two years earlier (1984) on the then current approaches to second language acquisition and a detailed investigation led by the UWM ESL faculty of their own program. In the section on how the Focal Skills Approach works, Hastings provides an overview of how an ESL student would progress through the Focal Skills Approach by providing a summary of each module the ESL student would have to traverse through based on his placement test scores for each module. In the research section, Hastings provides a report on the effectiveness of the Focal Skills when compared to other traditional ESL programs, and he also describes a case that demonstrates ineffective results of the approach when the approach is implemented incorrectly. In the recent development section, Hastings provides information on the then newly developed International Center for Focal Skills housed at Shenandoah University (SU) and states that graduate students seeking ESOL certification or a master's degree have the opportunity to see the Focal Skills Approach first-hand through the SU ESL department's endorsing and implementing Hastings' Focal Skills Approach and a graduate course that focuses on the approach itself.

Hastings, A. J. (n.d.). International Center for Focal Skills. Retrieved December 28, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs>

This site provides links explaining what the International Center for Focal Skills is all about and advancing the approach for university ESL instruction. A link explaining in detail how the Focal Skills Approach would function in a typical university Intensive English Program (IEP) setting is included. Some recommended reading about the Focal Skills Approach is provided, along with a link to Stephen Krashen's website whose language acquisition theories predominate in the Focal Skills Approach. The site also lists and explains the "five-star" status

awarded to universities using the Focal Skills Approach and gives an explanation of the World English Language Leadership Award along with who has received the award annually since 1996.

Hastings, A. J. (n.d.). In defense of c-testing. Retrieved December 28, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/indefense.htm>

Hastings provides four sections in his article on the defense of C-testing. In the first section, Hastings provides an overview to Jafarpur's position on the use and conclusions of c-testing. In the second section, Hastings explains the classical cloze procedure; the shortcomings of the classical cloze procedure; and the C-test criteria; and the rule of 2, which is the focal point of a well-conducted C-test. In the third section, Hastings critiques Jafarpur's study that discusses his design of his cloze test and C-test. Next, Hastings discusses the significance of native speaker scores. Last in this section, Hastings goes on to validate the use of C-tests (the crux of the Focal Skills Approach testing method) over cloze tests by analyzing Jafarpur's content validity, criterion-related validity, and face validity. In the last section, Hastings concludes and summarizes that Jafarpur has done much to continue to prove why C-tests are actually superior to cloze tests, which is contrary to what Jafarpur was originally intending to do in his article, "Is C-testing superior to cloze?"

Hastings, A. J. (1997). Movies and listening comprehension in focal skills programs. Retrieved December 28, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/movfs.htm>

Hastings discusses in the article the benefits of using movies to build and enhance listening comprehension, which is the fundamental base for the success of the other modules in

the Focal Skills Approach. First, Hastings briefly explains the overall makeup of the Focal Skills Approach, and then he explains the three goals that the Listening Module has as its foundation and how these goals are reached by the students through the use of movies. Hastings goes on to explain that movies range from all types of genres with a movie session usually lasting around two days. Instruction can focus on theme, character, and plot development with frequent comprehension checks given to the students and frequent paraphrasing and/or pausing the movie by the teacher to explain events in order to provide ample opportunities for comprehensible input to take place. The movie technique does require the teacher to spend a fair amount of time previewing each movie to thoroughly know the movie and when/where to pause for explanations so that the movie can be understood by all who view it. Hastings concludes the article by stating that not only are listening skills enhanced but the added benefits of speaking, reading, and writing skills are being enhanced as well without overt attention being paid to these specific skill development areas.

Hastings, A. J. & Murphy B. (1997). Making movies comprehensible to ESL learners. Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/movcomfs.htm>

Hastings and Murphy specifically discuss the movie technique used in the Listening Module that makes movies more comprehensible to their ESL learners. Hastings and Murphy describe in their first two sections an overview of the Listening Module in the Focal Skills Approach and explain how comprehensible input enhances language acquisition. In the third section, Hastings and Murphy discuss the movie technique in detail by describing the two essential features of the movie technique, which are narration and paraphrasing. In the fourth section, Hastings and Murphy provide statistical analysis that compares the gains made in the

Listening Module with those of other traditional ESL programs, and they go on to show other quantitative lexical analysis (i.e. illustrated words and word frequency charts) that again help prove the gains that are made by students using the movie technique in the Listening Module of the Focal Skills Approach over other traditional approaches.

Hastings, A. & Murphy, B. (2002). The focused rewrite technique. Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/rewrite.htm>

Hastings and Murphy provide five sections that explain what the Focused Rewrite Technique (FRWT) is and how it is effectively used in the Writing Module of the Focal Skills Approach. In the first section, Hastings and Murphy explain what FRWT is and the steps that are involved in the FRWT process. In the second section, Hastings and Murphy provide four overall points of when FRWT can be used successfully in either the Focal Skills setting or other types of settings. In the third section, Hastings and Murphy explain four underlying assumptions that govern the FRWT, which are heavily influenced by the theories and approaches developed and/or advocated by Dr. Stephen Krashen. In the fourth section, Hastings and Murphy discuss nine overall practical guidelines for effectively using the FRWT that are based on Hastings and Murphy's experience of using the technique in their own classrooms. In the last section, Hastings and Murphy transcribe an example essay from ETS using FRWT that shows how the technique is to be used.

Krashen, S.D. (1984). *Writing: Research, theory, and applications*. Torrance, CA: Laredo Publishing.

Krashen has four sections in his book on writing from the research to the application. In his first section, Krashen focuses on reading and writing specifically in the areas of the writing and writing frequency controversy; reading and writing compared where more reading actually produces better writing; writing and instruction in the context of feedback; the effects of grammar instruction during this phase in writing; research on the composing process in the areas of planning, rescanning, revising, and recursion; and a discussion on the awareness of audience when one is writing. In his second section, Krashen focuses on competence and performance in writing. Specifically, in this section, Krashen discusses second language acquisition and learning to write, the complexity argument, the limits reading has on writing, etc. In the third section, Krashen focuses on applications to writing by discussing writing problems, developing an efficient composing process, and the role of grammar teaching during the writing process. In his last section, Krashen focuses on writing in a second language. In this section, Krashen discusses what is known about second language writing, writing and writing frequency, instruction, and the overall composing process in second language writers (i.e. planning, revision, second language problems, etc.).

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York: Longman Group.

Krashen divides his book into three main chapters. In the first chapter, Krashen provides information on his input hypothesis and how this input hypothesis influences second language acquisition. Krashen discusses his five hypotheses that govern the input hypothesis along with

fundamental principles governing second language acquisition. He also provides evidence that supports the input hypothesis from the silent period through application of developing writing styles. In the second chapter, Krashen focuses on current issues such as production actually preceding perception of the language; fossilization of the language acquisition process; the understanding of the language spoken without yet speaking the language; and practical objections teachers and students have had with using the input hypothesis. In the last chapter, Krashen deals with the implications of his input hypothesis through a four-stage approach from general language teaching to the student being fully mainstreamed. He then discusses the application of this four-stage approach in various ESL environments from special purpose programs to university level ESL programs.

Krashen, S. D. (1987). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Krashen has five sections in his book dealing with principles and practices in second language acquisition. In his first section, Krashen discusses the theory to practice relationship. Specifically, Krashen three approaches to the method (i.e. theory of second language acquisition, applied linguistics research, ideas and intuitions from experience); interactions among approaches to practice; what the three approaches have to say about the method; and the goals of the book that Krashen desired to get across to his audience (i.e. reintroduce teachers to theory and gain their confidence again). In the second section, Krashen first discusses the five hypotheses about second language acquisition (i.e. natural order hypothesis, Monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, etc.), and then discusses the causative variable in second language acquisition (i.e. when language teaching does and does not help, exposure variables, age, acculturation, etc).

In the third section, Krashen discusses the potential of the second language classroom; limitations of the classroom; the role of output (i.e. conversation and language acquisition and output and learning); characteristics of optimal input for acquisition (i.e. optimal input is comprehensible; optimal input is interesting and/or relevant; optimal input is not grammatically sequenced, etc.); other features that encourage acquisition such as the student not being placed on the defensive and providing tools to help students obtain more input; and teaching conversational competence. In the fourth section, Krashen discusses that learning does not become acquisition; the place grammar has in his input hypothesis; the effects of learning for accuracy in self-correction; other effects conscious rules play in interference of communication; presentation of rules; notes on error correction; and grammar as a subject-matter. In the last section, Krashen first provides a summary of the current teaching methods (i.e. grammar-translation, audiolingualism, cognitive-code, direct method, natural approach, etc.), then discusses applied linguistic research, alternative methods, achievement testing, and finishes with some gaps in the materials and some problems in changing teachers' and students' views to language acquisition being the main focus of the classroom instead of learning the overt grammatical points in the English language.

Krashen, S.D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. New York: Prentice Hall.

Krashen devotes nine chapters to the subject of second language and second language learning. In chapter one, Krashen discusses several types of language learners from the learners who are afraid to learn because of the dreaded fear of making a mistake, to the learner who acquires the language focusing on grammar when appropriate and allowing the grammar to take

a back seat when communication becomes the driving force behind the acquisition opportunity. In chapter two Krashen deals with how attitude and aptitude affect language acquisition. Simply, language attitude affects the acquisition of the target language based on how the language learner perceives the target language compared to his own language and also takes into consideration variations of people's personalities. With aptitude, Krashen is considering how the learner processes learned information (overt learning) and how that person performs on tests. In chapter three, Krashen discusses the advantages of formal and informal environments that are conducive to language acquisition with his professional leanings toward the informal environment where acquisition can most naturally take place without the learner being overtly aware of the acquisition process. In chapter four, Krashen discusses the issue of how morphemes are acquired in a certain order. He also discusses in this chapter how the order of morpheme acquisition is disrupted when the learner's main focus is on producing correct structures rather than focusing on communication. In chapter five, Krashen deals with the issue of how the first language affects the second language acquisition process. Krashen deals with issues of how the reliance on the first language heavily influences a person's first utterances when he/she is not really ready to speak or has had sufficient amount of time (i.e. silent period) for the learned system to be internalized. In chapter six, Krashen deals with the science of language acquisition focusing on issues of when cerebral dominance actually occurs (i.e. critical period). He also discusses other issues such as the right hemisphere of the brain playing a tremendous role in the early stages of acquisition not only in the second language process but also in the first language process. In chapter seven, Krashen deals with the controversy over routines and patterns not really being a part of the learned or the acquired language systems but do serve a purpose in helping establish role relationships in social interactions. In chapter eight, Krashen goes into detail about how his

input hypothesis validates that language acquisition needs to focus more on the message rather than the form and how providing lots of comprehensible input aids the language acquisition process. In chapter nine, Krashen deals with the issue of simple codes and the roles that simple codes play in the acquisition process of providing the necessary input that is comprehensible in a manner that lowers the affective filter of the language learner thus providing better opportunities for acquisition to take place.

Krashen, S.D. (1992). *Fundamentals of language education*. Torrance, CA: Laredo Publishing.

Krashen has five chapters in this book. In the first chapter, Krashen discusses language acquisition through his Monitor Model. He discusses the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Krashen concludes the chapter with a discussion over the fact that conversing is not really practicing the language but is the result or output of what has been internalized or acquired. In chapter two, Krashen devotes the entire chapter to the fact that the reading hypothesis mirrors itself to his creation of the input hypothesis. In chapter three, Krashen discusses how cognitive development occurs and specifically reading and writing with cognitive development. In the latter part of the chapter, he discusses free voluntary reading and other enterprises (i.e. subject matter content) where reading can be enhanced. In chapter four, Krashen discusses beginning language teaching methods and limitations of the methods on the beginning language learner. He also discusses the benefits of free reading and how the Canadian sheltered subject matter teaching (SSMT) aids in language acquisition and content knowledge and other uses for SSMT such as with games, popular literature, and linguistics. Chapter five deals with how bilingual education really enhances the L2 by using the student's first language and how

advanced first language development better aids the student's acquisition of his/her L2 than a person who is weak or uneducated in his/her L1.

Krashen, S.D. (1997). *Foreign language education the easy way*. Culver City, CA: Language Education Associates.

Krashen has five overall sections dealing with foreign language teaching. In the first section, he does a brief overview of what he will be discussing in the book. In section two, Krashen discusses how a foreign language can be acquired very similarly to a second language by using his Monitor Model. In the third section, Krashen goes into great detail explaining the components of a foreign language program (i.e. pre-speech stage through speech emergence, direct teaching of grammar, negative reactions to the Natural Approach, sheltered popular literature, FVR, developing, academic language, etc.). In section four, Krashen discusses issues in foreign language education in the areas of foreign language vs. second language, lack of native speakers outside of the classroom environment, conversational ability, time problems, etc. In section five, Krashen concludes that creating free voluntary reading/listening environments can increase acquisition. He also mentions that if foreign language teachers focus more on communication in the language instead of learning about the language and literature, they may very well increase interest and true acquisition in the students taking the foreign language classes.

Krashen, S.D. (2004). *The power of reading: Insights from the research*. (2nd ed.). Wesport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited.

Krashen has three overall sections to this book. In the first section, Krashen provides the research behind the use and benefit of Free Voluntary Reading (FVR). He also provides the research behind alternatives to FVR. One of the alternatives is direct instruction, and he demonstrates how direct instruction falls short compared to the benefits of FVR. He goes on to explain the benefits of reading and the cognitive developments that take place from the sheer pleasure of reading. In the second section, Krashen discusses ways that can increase a student's desire to read with just the simple access that the student has to reading material at home, school, and the local library. In each of these areas, Krashen goes on to show that the higher a person's socio-economic status, the better quality and sheer volume of access to reading materials that the person has available to him/her. Krashen next discusses the benefits to read alouds and the reading experience itself (i.e. providing time to read, direct encouragement, etc.). Last in this section, Krashen discusses the benefits of light reading (i.e. comic books) and what the research has indicated about using rewards as a way to motivate students to read. In Krashen's last section, he discusses that more writing does not necessarily produce better writing but that reading is really the key that heavily influences a person's writing style. He also discusses the effects that the television has had on the growing epidemic of students having little desire to read. Last, he concludes this last section by touching on how reading affects second language learners.

Krashen, S. D. & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. San Francisco: Alemany Press.

Krashen and Terrell provide seven chapters on the Natural Approach. In the first chapter Krashen and Terrell discuss traditional and non-traditional approaches to language teaching that

have been in various uses and popularity up through the time their book was written. They also provide an overview of their theory of the Natural Approach within this first chapter. In the second chapter, Krashen and Terrell introduce and explain the input hypothesis and the five hypotheses that govern the input hypothesis along with factors that influence second language acquisition. In the third chapter, Krashen and Terrell discuss the implications of second language acquisition theory along with the Natural Approach and language acquisition theory. In chapter four, Krashen and Terrell discuss curriculum organization, classroom activities during the silent period into the early stages of language production, and managing classroom activities when using the Natural Approach to guide language instruction. In chapter five, Krashen and Terrell describe various affective-humanistic activities along with problem-solving activities, games, content activities, and grouping techniques for acquisition activities that aid in oral communication of the target language. In chapter six, Krashen and Terrell provide additional sources for acquisition and learning such as how reading should be taught; using the television and radio as sources for the input of the target language; and the realistic uses of homework when appropriate for the learner's needs. In the last chapter, Krashen and Terrell provide insight on topics such as testing, teaching grammar rules, the overuse of error correction, and the modification of age differences and second language instruction in general.

Murphy, B. (1997). Evaluation of the Focal Skills Pilot ESL Program at Golden West College, 1993-94. Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/evalfs.htm>

Murphy describes and discusses Steven Isonio's evaluation of the Focal Skills Approach being compared to another ESL approach at the Golden West College in Huntington, CA during the school year of 1993-94. Murphy describes how Isonio tailored the Focal Skills Approach to

better fit what he had schematically going on at Golden West College. Murphy goes on to discuss that this tailoring critically hindered the appropriate placement of students through the progression of the modules. Basically, some students were ready to move forward but could not until the semester in which that module was placed in was over, or students were pushed into the other modules when they were not ready because they met the semester time-limit allotted for completion of that module at Golden West College. Murphy also further explains that the reasons for mediocre results in the other modules (reading, writing, and immersion) when compared to the already established traditional ESL program are mainly due to improper time constraints and progression of students through the modules. Murphy goes on to state that other reasons for the mediocre results could be due to teachers not being totally committed to the Focal Skills Approach as well as the students in the pilot program not performing at their best because of the newness of the Focal Skills modular program vs. the traditional program progression that is well-established at Golden West College. Overall, Murphy concludes that the mediocre results are not due to a weakness with the Focal Skills Approach itself, but are due to the improper implementation of the approach by the administration at Golden West College.

Murphy, B. & Hastings, A. (2006). Making movies more comprehensible: The narrative/paraphrase approach. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 2, Article 5. Retrieved December 30, 2006 from http://bbd.su.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=_83_1

Murphy and Hastings in this article discuss the movie technique that is extensively used in the Listening Module of the Focal Skills Approach that was developed by Dr. Ashley

Hastings. The movie technique is used to allow the student to develop and enhance his/her listening skills. All movies and conversations in class are conducted in English. Two main forms of communication—narrating and paraphrasing take place in the movie technique that allow for input to be made comprehensible to the student (second language learner). Murphy and Hastings provide various analyses that demonstrate how these two forms of communication effectively aid in the comprehension of the language being spoken to the students more than the students just simply trying to listen and watch the actors in the movies. Murphy and Hastings conclude that those who go through the Listening Module with the movie technique have shown to improve their listening comprehension quicker than those in other programs. Murphy and Hastings also suggest that using graded readers that go along with the movies might also further enhance listening comprehension and the movie going experience that takes place in the Listening Module.

Murphy, B. & Hastings, A. (2006). The utter hopelessness of explicit grammar teaching. *The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 2, Article 2. Retrieved December 30, 2006 from http://bbd.su.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab=courses&url=/bin/common/course.pl?course_id=_83_1

Murphy and Hastings discuss the inadequacies of teaching explicit grammar to native and non-native students alike. Murphy and Hastings give the common reasons why grammar is still taught in school such as from sheer habit because grammar has always been explicitly taught in U.S. public education. At the heart of the teaching explicit grammar controversy is the issue of the amount of details in the explanations. Grammar authors of today, i.e. Azar, create watered

down rules for supposed ease of teaching and remembrance. What has unfortunately taken place, which was clearly demonstrated by Murphy and Hastings in their article is that the simpler explanations are not truly modeling what they are trying to explain if someone were to follow the grammar rules to the letter. The anomaly is that if the English teacher teaches the rules given in today's grammar books, he/she is sacrificing the grammatical complexity for simplicity but if the complexity were truly taught as it should be, then the average native speaker would not even be able to follow or comprehend the true complexities of supposed simple grammatical structures. Murphy and Hastings suggest that instead of becoming mired in this controversy, focus on the natural acquisition process that our minds are wired for.

Smith, H. (1996). Factors in second language success: Do we need a sports car or a pickup truck?

Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/factors.htm>

Smith explains in his article that knowing about the language and knowing how to communicate in that language are two vastly different aspects to language teaching. For many years language teaching (foreign or second) has focused more on the former rather than on the latter. Smith goes into detail explaining Gass and Selinker's research that there is more to language teaching than just teaching about the language, but the student him/herself plays a major role in how much he/she will acquire of the language. Smith indicates that instead of all the fancy programs with all of the bells and whistles (corvette) that are out there to draw students to the program, he advocates for an effective program that fulfills the needs of the students successfully, such a program very well may not possess all the bells and whistles but relies on solid current research and teaching practices (pickup truck).

Smith, H. (1996). Focal skills: An innovative approach to TESOL. Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/innovat.htm>

Smith provides an overview of what the Focal Skills Approach is all about. In the first section, Smith states that the Focal Skills Approach wherever it has been tried either outperforms or is right beside traditional approaches in the results that the approach produces in its ESL population. Smith then goes on to briefly explain how the Focal Skills Approach is set-up in the university IEP setting. In the next section, Smith discusses the placement and assessment process that is the backbone of the Focal Skills Approach. In the third section, Smith responds to two frequently asked questions about the use of the Focal Skills Approach. Smith concludes his article by reaffirming the results that the Focal Skills Approach produces when compared to other ESL approaches and the success with the program through succinct teacher and student descriptions and testimonials after having gone through the program.

Smith, H. & Yan, Y. (1997). Focal skills and L2 acquisition: Writers do it better in cyberspace. Retrieved December 29, 2006 from <http://www.su.edu/icfs/l2acquis.htm>

Smith and Yan first discuss in detail the set-up of the Focal Skills Approach with its four modular progressions through four-week placement testing with a person staying in a particular module until they successfully pass the placement test. Smith and Yan then go into great detail discussing the fourth module, which is the Immersion module. Smith and Yan discuss that one of electives in this module can be a Focused Rewrite Technique that uses a computer and the Internet as mediums for instructional opportunities. The computers provide the students with the ability to communicate to others including the teacher hence a focus on real communication which in turn provides the teacher with opportunities to conduct the FRWT, and the students are

motivated simply because of the ownership of the writing and the creation of the writing topic. Smith and Yan also discuss the Internet as a tool to continue to enhance students' reading by allowing the students to pick search engines and then investigate and report on findings that interest the students. Last, Smith and Yan conclude that with all approaches there are flaws but so far none have really criticized the Focal Skills Approach outside of implementation issues that must be adhered to in order for maximum benefits to be reaped by students and teachers alike.

Focal Skills Approach Adapted for Greenville County High Schools

Stephen Place

TSOL 692

January 19, 2007

Focal Skills Approach Adapted for Greenville County High Schools

Greenville County School District (GCSD) operates fourteen high schools. Each of these fourteen high schools is realistically going in fourteen different directions in regard to how they service their ESOL students. The only consistencies these fourteen high schools have in the implementation of their ESOL curriculum are attempting to follow the South Carolina ESOL standards and the administering of the entrance and exit tests. The South Carolina ESOL standards are heavily aligned with the South Carolina English/language arts standards, and the ESOL standards are not to be used alone but are to be used in conjunction with the student's grade level and/or subject area content standards (South Carolina Department of Education, 2006).

Greenville County's ESOL Student Placement and Assessment

Greenville County uses state-mandated entrance and exit tests for its ESOL students. The IDEA Proficiency test (IPT I, II, and III) is the assessment that is given to students entering the district for the first time. Students who are in the Greenville County high school ESOL program are assessed on the development of their macroskills each spring using the English Language Development Assessment (ELDA) test. The students' scores range from 1-5. Once the students have scored a five for three consecutive years, the students are exited from the program but are continuously monitored by the high school ESOL teachers. A high school ESOL student transferring from another district within the state is placed in the ESOL program based on their ELDA score (E. Sisk, personal communication, January 8, 2007). Due to the three consecutive five score requirement on the ELDA, it is possible for an ESOL student to never be able to fully leave the ESOL program. If the ESOL high school student has a bad day or simply is not a good test taker, which causes him/her to mess up just once on the annual ELDA test, then he/she has

just resigned him/herself to remaining in the ESOL program instead of being fully mainstreamed. The ESOL student's failure to be fully mainstreamed means that the ESOL student will be unable to take electives that may be of interest to him/her, because he/she will be stuck taking the ESOL class instead until the desired score has been achieved three consecutive times.

Students who have scored the desired five on the ELDA are monitored but do not receive ESOL services. Those who have scored a four are placed on an unofficial itinerant status. The itinerant students instead of being in the ESOL class full-time are placed in another content class or elective class to help them continue to meet their graduation requirements. Basically, those itinerant students possess adequate language skills to be successful in the mainstream classroom, but since they still have not achieved the three consecutive fives on the ELDA, they come everyday for the last fifteen minutes of the ESOL class to check in with the ESOL teacher on their academic progress. In essence, the state requires the three consecutive scores of five on the ELDA, which is given each spring, before ESOL services can be terminated. Greenville County has placed some students, who have not been able to reach the desired score three consecutive times, in mainstream classes, because the teacher is confident based on many informal assessments that these students do possess sufficient language skills to be able to function successfully in the classroom. This type of unofficial placement allows these itinerant students to obtain one more credit toward graduation rather than having the full ESOL class period and not receiving credit for this class. The ESOL students receive credit for the ESOL class only the first time that they take the class in the majority of the high school ESOL programs (E. Sisk, personal communication, January 8, 2007). This credit system is setting the ESOL students up for failure, since they are required to take the ESOL class at least three times in order to achieve three consecutive fives on the ELDA. The system only gives them credit for one of the three classes.

In essence, the student will be taking the ESOL class and not receiving credit for two more years, which means they will also not be able to take another class to receive credit toward graduation. By requiring the students to score a five three consecutive times on the ELDA, the state and district are placing the ESOL students at a huge disadvantage. Regular high school students have a hard time scheduling all the necessary courses required to earn the 24 Carnegie credits needed to receive a high school diploma in the state of South Carolina, without having to take the same course until they achieve a predetermined score for three consecutive years! The ESOL/ELDA system can also hinder the high schools and the district from performing well on the South Carolina Report Card and No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), since graduation rate is one of the areas assessed on those performance indicators. The graduation rate is based on students who graduate from high school in four years. Students who take five years to graduate or who drop out of school lower this graduation rate (Public Law, 2002). The current ESOL/ELDA system with its three consecutive scoring requirements could possibly discourage the ESOL student to the point of him/her dropping out or considering dropping out. Basically, this system is establishing the mentality of "I'm not getting credit for this, so what's the point" in our ESOL students.

Greenville County high schools follow three different educational time schedules. Some high schools follow the traditional seven period schedule, others follow an A/B schedule, while still others follow a 4 X 4 block schedule. The seven-period classes are approximately 50 minutes in length, while both the A/B and block schedules are 90 minutes in length. All ESOL classes follow whatever schedule that the school they are housed in follows. Each ESOL class meets everyday, except for schools which follow the A/B schedule. Some high schools which have a large ESOL population have the ESOL class levels 1-4 that they follow. Other ESOL

classes are structured around English language skills, academic skills, or a combination of the two.

One solution to Greenville County's high school ESOL situations of student placement and exit strategies, differing amounts of ESOL instructional time across the county, mixture of ESOL class offerings, and varied implementation of the SC ESL standards is to adapt the Focal Skills Approach for curriculum unity and implement TESOL Inc.'s 2006 revised standards, which better combines English language acquisition with all the core content areas instead of just a primary emphasis on the English/language arts academic standards and/or grade level standards that the creators of the SC ESL standards recommend.

The proposed curriculum focuses on two broad aspects—program development and curriculum design. I will focus on the first aspect, which is the program development.

Adapted Focal Skills Program Development

The four career centers provide the best opportunity to successfully adapt the Focal Skills Approach. The first thing that needs to be considered is the program development that will take place at the career center. There are four career centers strategically located throughout GCSD. Ideally, each career center will have one person who is the Focal Skills placement testing administrator that provides the placement tests every four weeks. Realistically, one testing administrator could oversee two career centers that are in close proximity to each other. This person is essential to the program so that the students see the Focal Skills teacher not as the formal test giver, which heightens their affective filters and alters their view of the teacher, but as one who is the facilitator or mentor, which allows the student to view the teacher as a person who has a genuine interest in helping them acquire the language and not one who is viewed as the “giver of grades.” The testing administrator has three primary roles. The first role is to be as

stated above the Focal Skills placement testing administrator. The second role is for the person to monitor the academic progress of all the ESOL students (from the high schools that that particular career center serves) who have completed the adapted Focal Skills program and are back in the high schools taking their academic content and elective classes for graduation requirements. The third role of the testing administrator is for him/her to act as the liaison between the district level ESOL administrator, the Focal Skills teachers, the career center administration, and the parents of the ESOL students. For the parents, the career center environment should help them not to view themselves so much as the minority, which causes many of the ESOL parents not to attend school functions. The administrator can provide literature from TESOL Inc. and the district about ways that they can be involved in their child's education and how they can have a voice in what is taking place with the Focal Skills program. I also believe that if the parents become involved with the adapted Focal Skills program, that involvement will lessen their fears about not being heard by providing a safe environment where they can be heard, since they are the only clientele that the program serves. It is possible that this parent involvement will transfer to the local high schools where the parents can even become more proactive than what they were in the Focal Skills program. The administrator also needs to be the middle man that runs interference for the Focal Skills teachers, but he/she also needs to protect the program and promote the program to school-related officials (school administrators, district personnel, school board officials, etc.) and within the community. The credentials for the Focal Skills testing administrator are that ideally, he/she possesses a master's degree in TESOL and either has some experience in the administrative role, has taken a course that dealt to some extent with administrative duties, or has the desire to take on the administrative role. Ideally, promotion to this role should come from those who are veteran ESOL teachers within the ESOL

program, preferably ones who are already high school ESOL teachers. Realistically, the administrative position can be filled by someone who holds a certificate in ESOL, has been teaching in the field for several years, and has a willing desire to fulfill the obligations that come with being the Focal Skills testing administrator.

There will be a need for four teachers in order for the Focal Skills adaptation to be successful. Each teacher will be responsible for teaching one Module in the Focal Skills program. This would result in a total of sixteen teachers for the four career centers. The best scenario is to have the current high school ESOL teachers fill the positions which should result in only two positions remaining open. These positions can be open to other ESOL teachers on the middle or elementary level or can be available to new hires. In essence, fill the positions with teachers already teaching ESOL to keep down the costs of hiring new personnel. Each teacher will be immersed in how their module functions and will also know on a basic level how each of the other modules function. They will also have common planning so that they can continue to be sounding boards for each other as they go through and develop the program. The credentials for the Focal Skills' teacher needs to be either a master's degree in TESOL, a TESOL certificate from SC, or a TESOL certificate that meets the minimum certificate requirements for SC. Another requirement is that the potential Focal Skills teacher must be on board with how the Focal Skills program functions in theory and practicality. The ideal teacher needs to be one who is creative. This program has no textbook which it follows. The curriculum provides suggestions but it is up to the teacher to create and implement daily lessons. In essence, this program does take a lot of teacher time and devotion for it to be successful. The teacher also needs to be a believer in the student-centered approach to teaching. This program thrives on the teacher having the students as the central force that governs language acquisition opportunities,

and it also allows for a lot of interaction with the students, since the Focal Skills teacher is the primary source for providing a plethora of opportunities for "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, p. 2) to occur.

The housing necessary for the adapted Focal Skills Approach is minimal. The testing administrator would need office space primarily to house the testing materials as well as enough space to house a desk, chair, phone, computer, and printer to enable the monitoring of mainstreamed ESOL students. The teachers have several options. The ideal option would be to have four classrooms on one hall. These four classrooms on one hall would create a sense of community among the ESOL student population and provide the teachers with that community atmosphere as well. The benefits of common planning and proximity provide better opportunities for collaboration and working together as a team of teachers instead of the "go it alone" attitude. A second option would be to find four classrooms throughout the career centers. The classrooms will still be in the career center building but will not provide that sense of community and belonging. A third option would be to place four portables on each of the career center sites. These portables would be located away from the front of the main entrance of the career center so as not to take away from the aesthetic looks of the career centers. These portables would be located near each other, which would provide that sense of community. Since Greenville County is either building or renovating their schools, there are portables that GCSD owns that they could easily move to the career centers once the other schools are done with them. The owned portables would only cost GCSD in transportation rather than purchasing and transporting them to the desired sites.

Transportation is another factor that needs to be considered. I believe that the transportation costs for the ESOL students will be relatively low. Each high school already has

students that attend the career centers either in the morning or in the afternoon, and each high school already has school buses that transport these students to and from the career centers. In most of the high schools, the addition of the ESOL students being split in the mornings and afternoons will not be a financial problem, because the students will be easily absorbed into the number of buses already allotted for that high school. In a few cases, I do believe that an additional bus or two running in the morning, afternoon, or both will be needed, but this should be a relatively minor financial cost that the district can easily absorb into its financial budget through the use of Title I or Title III funds.

Again, the proposed curriculum focuses on two broad aspects—program development and curriculum design. I will now focus on the second aspect, which is the curriculum design.

Adapted Focal Skills Curriculum Design

The success of the Focal Skills Approach centralizes around two key components—frequent placement testing (every four weeks) and amount of instructional time within each module (three hours daily). These two components call for a change in how Greenville County School District goes about providing ESOL services to its ESOL population. With all the high schools following three different instructional time patterns, there will be no consistency in the instructional time given the students if the Focal Skills Approach is implemented at each individual high school, which as stated earlier is a key component to the success of the approach. Using the career centers alleviates these instructional time and testing problems. The typical career center instructional schedule is a 45 minute planning period at the beginning of the day, 2 hours and 40 minutes instructional time in the morning, 1 hour and 20 minutes planning/lunch, 2 hours and 20 minutes instructional time in the afternoon, and 25 minute planning period in the afternoon (Price, n.d.). The planning time would offer the Focal

Skills teachers the opportunity to collaborate and work as a team, and the instructional time given in the mornings and afternoons offers the closest amount of instructional and testing time needed for the Focal Skills Approach to be successful. The instructional time provided at the career centers also allows the approach to maintain its intensity and rigor, which provides GCSD the opportunity to completely mainstream its ESOL students sooner and have them succeeding academically and being an academic asset instead of a liability on the annual report cards and AYP.

As previously stated, the Focal Skills Approach will function using its placement testing and modular design. The primary role of the testing administrator is to conduct the placement testing every four weeks. Since the Focal Skills Approach is taught entirely in English, the main purpose of the placement testing is to ensure and guarantee that the student is placed in the module that best fits their language needs. The testing administrator will use a different test each testing session for the listening, reading, and writing modules, so that the results will more accurately place the students rather than using the same test again and again thereby falsifying results due to test familiarity by the student. These tests can either be given to the district from the personnel of the International Center for the Focal Skills Approach or purchased from them at a reasonable price. I also believe that with the frequent placement testing, these tests could easily satisfy the three consecutive fives on the ELDA that SC requires. Essentially, the ELDA is testing their macroskills, which the Focal Skills placement tests do as well. The Focal Skills Approach does not allow the student to move on to another module until the student receives the satisfactory predetermined score on the placement test. By receiving the required placement test score, the student is demonstrating that he/she has mastered the macro skill for the particular module. Also, the testing administrator will not use the module teacher to aid in the testing. I

believe that if the teacher is used, it will have a negative impact upon the students. The students should see the teacher as the facilitator and mentor (positive roles) and not as a person who aids in administering the test (negative role), which could raise the affective filters of the students and thus unnecessarily hinder language acquisition opportunities. The final role that the testing administrator plays in the curriculum is that of finding and using funding that is provided by Title I and III of NCLB and providing opportunities for the teachers to attend conferences and workshops. The testing administrator is to have each teacher join TESOL Inc. as a professional obligation and schedule for the administrator and/or Focal Skills teachers to attend local, state, and/or national conferences and workshops. The attendance of these conferences and workshops provides the teacher updated information on current happenings in the TESOL profession and field. The conferences and workshops will allow the TESOL faculty to form camaraderie among the group and alleviate burnout conditions.

The first module is the listening module. In this module, the primary goal is to improve the students' listening skills, which is the basis of success in all the other modules and in the academic classroom as well. The main activity in this module is the movie technique. The movie technique is done with the teacher constantly narrating and paraphrasing what is taking place in the movie. The narration and paraphrasing causes a continuous flow of input that is comprehensible to the ESOL student. The students can reinforce what the teacher is saying by watching the character and plot development in each movie. As a precursor to the movie technique a newly promoted activity is the graded reader. The graded reader activity involves the use of a book that corresponds to the movie being shown. The teacher will read the book aloud to the students prior to viewing the movie. This reading increases the comprehensibility of the movie for the students. In order to obtain the maximum benefit from this module, the teacher

selected for this module needs to possess several qualities and abilities. First this teacher must realize and understand that the module is very time consuming. This teacher must be willing to put forth the time and effort to adequately prepare for the movie technique. The majority of the time consumption comes from viewing the movies several times until the teacher knows them in detail. When showing the movie, the teacher's knowledge will help him/her to know the appropriate places to stop the movie for narration and paraphrasing. The teacher also needs to be able to think quickly on the spot to give correct responses to students' questions about the movie. The teacher also needs to be highly energetic and remain positive while not getting easily frustrated through multiple stopping, rewinding, and replaying of the movie. The teacher must have knowledge of the students' cultures and backgrounds in order to choose movies that will not be offensive to any students' culture. The teacher must also be familiar with the school districts' policies about showing movies in the classroom. Finally, the teacher needs have the technical knowledge to run the video equipment.

The next module is the reading module. The main focus of this module is to work on reading comprehension with the use of authentic materials such books, magazines, and newspapers. The two main activities in this module are the application of Krashen's Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) and Interactive reading. FVR is an activity that has the students read for pure enjoyment with no assessment is required. Students can start with light reading which can be magazines or comic books for boys and for girls teen romances (i.e. the *Sweet Valley High* series). In FVR the teacher acts as a resource to recommend readings for the students taking into consideration the level each student is on. In the Interactive Reading activity the teacher and the students will read an authentic passage (i.e. *USA Today*) three times. The first time both teacher and students read the passage together silently. The second time through the

teacher and the students discuss the passage and answer student and teacher led questions. Then they read the passage out loud with their gained comprehension. These activities require a large amount of authentic materials to be accessible to both teacher and students; therefore, Title I and Title III funds could be allocated for the start up of a small library at each of the career centers. Any certified ESOL will be able to easily fulfill the requirements of this module.

The third module is the writing module. The students will continue to read in this module. Student writing topics can be generated from what they read on the internet, through their personal reading of authentic materials, or just from general topics that they are interested in from their home countries. The reason for the student generated topics versus teacher generated topics is with student generated topics the students place more of a personal investment in the quality of the writing than they would on a topic that may interest the teacher but not the student. Next, the teacher completes a Focused Rewrite using one of the paragraphs in the student generated topic. The teacher gathers the writing, then reads the papers with the student making sure he/she understands what the student wrote; rewrites a paragraph using Standard English; conferences with the student a second time showing what the student communicated using standard English; and thus, the student through the conferencing and showing of the rewritten paragraph will be able to acquire the writing skills that he/she is ready to acquire. Doing the Focused Rewrite technique requires a lot of time from the teacher in this module. The qualification for the Writing Module teacher is that they have mastery-level knowledge of Standard English. It may be best due to the potential volume of rewrites in this module to have all the Focal Skills teachers during one of their common planning periods to spend time helping this teacher complete and stay abreast of all the rewrites that will need to be completed.

The fourth module will still be titled the Advanced Module, and it will still have the academic focus that the module has on the university level. The difference with this module and the university level module is that we will have the TESOL Inc. 2006 revised standards as the guiding force for classroom activities. I believe that using the TESOL Inc. revised standards will satisfy those who are concerned that the Focal Skills Approach is not incorporating enough of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS). Students who enter this module have demonstrated that they possess an intermediate knowledge and use of the English language. Now, I believe that by having the TESOL Inc. revised standards in the fourth module, we will have an easier time teaching the students the necessary academic skills they will need to be successful in the classroom. One benefit of using the TESOL Inc. revised standards is that they are more naturally aligned to the expectations of NCLB. Another benefit in using them is that the authors of the revised standards contacted and consulted with each of the nationally acclaimed content area professional organizations for their input on how these standards can be successfully incorporated into all the content areas. A third benefit of using the TESOL Inc. revised standards is that they incorporate all the content areas as stated above, which is one thing that the 2006 SC ESOL standards do not do. A fourth benefit of using the TESOL Inc. revised standards is that the standards were created using a bottom-up approach instead of a top-down approach, which means that these standards were created from the ESOL teachers currently teaching in the field. Not only does TESOL Inc. provide standards that can be used as the backdrop to guide activities, but they also provide other areas as well such as the grade level clusters, of which we will be using the 9th-12th grade cluster. In the advanced module, the language domains (macroskills) are still being enhanced, and language proficiency is still a priority. The TESOL Inc. revised standards also provide performance definitions for levels of

language proficiency, model performance indicators, and individual strands that can be followed in those model performance indicators (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 2005). The idea behind using the TESOL Inc. revised standards is to provide a better environment than the 2006 SC ESOL standards do where the student can still enhance his macroskills by now using those macroskills to develop and enhance his/her academic skills. Basically, the student should be able to more successfully use the English language to build upon his/her academic skills in addition to obtain the high school diploma at the end of their twelfth grade year. Using TESOL Inc.'s revised standards in the advanced module allows us to focus on this academic goal so that when the students leave the program, they will be successful in the classroom. To ensure the academic teachers that these students are capable of successfully performing in their classes, I believe that developing a portfolio in the advanced module would be a beneficial and proactive way of demonstrating to both the parent and teacher that the ESOL student is ready to handle all of his/her academic and elective classes successfully. Input from the core content area teachers in what they are expecting to see in the portfolio would help the advanced module teacher to know what to focus on and develop in the students. Also included in this module can be other focuses as well such as developing test taking strategies and preparing for other state and/or federal tests. The qualification for the teacher of the advanced module is one who has a liberal arts background from their undergraduate days. The liberal arts education has already provided a basic foundation for how the advanced module teacher can implement the TESOL Inc. standards and create classroom activities in the core content areas.

The four modules can be counted for elective credit. Each module could count as one credit. The reason for the credit option is to ensure especially for those who may take more time

progressing through the program that they are still on track for fulfilling the minimum number credits needed for high school graduation and receiving his/her South Carolina diploma.

Conclusions

I believe that adopting and adapting the Focal Skills Approach to GCSD ESOL high school program will be very beneficial to the district and community. One benefit is that we can now have a program that ensures the high school administrators that these ESOL students can now be counted as assets instead of liabilities on the annual school report cards. Two, instead of having fourteen very different implementations of the SC ESOL standards with various results, we can now have a unified program that is ensuring the success of all its high school ESOL students in the academic and elective classes. Three, instead of having an ESOL student who has the necessary language skills to be successful in the classroom but cannot seem to obtain the three consecutive fives on the ELDA can now spend more time in the classroom where the ESOL student, teacher, parent, and administrators want them instead of taking a required class that is really not benefiting them academically. Four, instead of more and more high school ESOL students dropping out of high school, they can now have more reasons to stay and receive their diploma. By having them go through and successfully complete the program, we are providing our ESOL students with the language and academic tools that are necessary and vital for them to succeed in today's U.S. public school system. Five, through the Focal Skills program, we are providing a better opportunity for our ESOL parents to be more involved in what is taking place in their child's education. By having them in the majority, I firmly believe that we will have a better turn-out and participation of parents in school activities and that involvement can be transferred to the local high schools. Six, by having teachers who desire to be in the Focal Skills program from the beginning, we are ensuring our students and the

community that this way of teaching ESOL high school students can and does work. Seven, and most importantly, in 2013 NCLB requires that every child be performing on a proficient level on the annual standardized tests. By adopting the Focal Skills Approach to GCSD, I believe that we will be able to successfully fulfill and comply with this federal requirement at least for our ESOL high school population. If South Carolina continues to implement and uphold its rigorous standards for its teachers and students and continues to stay fairly close in its national standings in comparison to other state's standards, and if we adopt and successfully adapt the Focal Skills Approach with desirable results being obtained, then I believe that as international companies look for reasons to invest their business dollars and employees into South Carolina's economy, GCSD will be able to successfully meet their educational standards due to the success of the Focal Skills Approach.

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